

Group Dynamics

HOW CAN A LEADER ENCOURAGE AUTHENTIC DIVERSITY?

Small groups are designed to allow members to connect with others, study the Bible together, and express love in service. Disagreements over biblical truth and how to follow Christ are healthy and normal. However, small groups are not the place to air grievances or gossip.

A wise leader encourages honesty with respect. Understanding the different views of others is necessary for spiritual growth and community. A more complete understanding of the Scriptures is gained when group members come to the discussion with a willingness to learn from others.

Prejudice for any reason, whether overt or hidden, is contrary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ who offers redemption and community to everyone. It is the group leader's responsibility to oversee the conversation and confront any instance of judgment or disrespect.

HOW CAN A LEADER HELP THE GROUP HAVE A GREAT DISCUSSION?

- The first meeting can go a long way to assure that most of the discussions the group has will be vibrant and respectful, with each person participating. The first meeting should include light-hearted communication with conversation geared to the members getting to know each other.
- Encourage each group member to prepare their answers ahead of time. They will come to the group eager to share what they have learned and more open to the ideas of others.
- Be sure to include light-hearted connection time at the beginning of each meeting to build community.

WHAT IF PEOPLE WON'T TALK?

If the people have prepared ahead of time, they may just need time to review what they wrote. Silence is not the enemy in small groups. You may need to call on a talkative person to get the conversation started. Then ask, "What do the rest of you think?"

If the members have not prepared ahead of time, take time to read through the Scriptures and begin with easy, fact-based questions. Then try reading the application question again.

WHAT IF SOMEONE TALKS TOO MUCH?

If a member dominates every meeting, the other group members will lose interest in the group. It is also an advantage for the gabby person to learn to be more sensitive to the needs of others.

- Your first action is to pray about the situation. God may choose to solve the issue without your intervention. Make sure that your coach is aware of the situation.
- You can try arranging the seating in such a way that the talkative person is not in your line of sight.
- After reading the question, look at a quieter person. He may feel encouraged to speak up.
- Before reading the next question, you can say, "Let's hear from someone who has not answered anything yet".
- If all of these fail, you will have to speak privately to the person. Be friendly, but firm. Be kind, not judgmental. Say, "You remember that we started off the first week

saying that we wanted everyone to participate in the discussion? Well, I appreciate what you share, but would you please hold back? Some people are not getting time to contribute. Wait until a couple of others have shared their thoughts before you jump in. They have good things to share too.”

- If the person continues to dominate, you can choose to either have another private talk or to handle it within the group. Sometimes all that person needs is a look or speaking their name to remind them of your earlier conversation.

HOW CAN THE LEADER SET UP THE GROUP TO HELP FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION?

The **Great Commandment** (John 13:34-35) and the **Great Commission** (Matthew 28:19-20) are to be part of the DNA of your group from the very beginning. At the first meeting the leader can share the importance of loving others, sharing the Gospel, and making disciples.

T.E.A.M.S. is the process our Adult Small Group Ministry uses to strengthen small groups to obey the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

How to Build Community in Your Group

To build **AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS** within your Small Group, you and your members need to create a trusting community for one another that is a:

1. **SAFE PLACE**

We will do our part to create an environment where everyone can be **real**, open and **honest** with their struggles and victories, as we do life together.

2. **CONFIDENTIAL PLACE**

What is said in your group **STAYS** in your group (But if someone is in crisis, evaluate what you may need to share with your coach and / or pastor)

3. “DON’T TRY TO **FIX ME**” PLACE

We are not here to fix each other; Jesus does that part. Give encouragement, speak the truth, point to Jesus, and the Word.

4. “**EVERYONE GETS A CHANCE TO SHARE**” PLACE

Be sensitive about the **amount of time YOU** or anyone else shares. Leaders should only share about **25% to 35%** of the group time. Your goal is to get them talking! When difficult questions or uncomfortable topics arise, tell the group “great question! I don’t know the answer to that, let me research that and I will get back to you next week” and then find the answer in Scripture. (Or consult coach and/or pastor for difficult questions). Please keep your group on topic.

5. “DON’T PUT ME ON **THE SPOT**” PLACE

Be careful when you call on someone to pray, read out loud, or share until you are sure they are comfortable doing so.

6. AN EVERYONE IS **INCLUDED** PLACE

Be aware that due to your group members' varied personalities and church/group experiences that some will find it easy while others find it challenging to connect and build relationships within your group community. Implement activities and social opportunities where everyone is included. Cliques within the group may cause others to drop out of the group so please remind your members often about inviting and including everyone in group activities, outreaches, and social outings.

7. **HEALTHY** GROUP DYNAMICS PLACE

Be prepared to handle and redirect challenges, problems and the disengaged within your group dynamics. We have resources available that can help you learn how to do this; just ask your **Small Group Coach** for them.

Acts 2:46 "They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts."